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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AT PANMUNJOM

The Communists, as expected, have accused the UN Command of collusion with Rhee. They have asked for a recess of the talks, without breaking them off, to await developments between the UN Command and Rhee. Their letter of 20 June introduces one new possibility, that of a Korean truce which excludes the Republic of Korea.

The letter takes the line, which will be regarded as reasonable by much of the non-Communist world, that the UN Command bears the responsibility for Rhee's action in releasing the Korean prisoners, since it left the POW camps under the control of ROK troops despite South Korean public statements that the Korean prisoners might be released.

The Communists in effect are offering the UN two alternative courses of action, either of which would prove difficult to carry out. One is to conclude a truce which includes South Korea. In this event, the Communists request assurances that the UN Command can and will control Rhee, and further demand that 25,952 prisoners "released and detained under coercion" be recovered.

The demand for recovery of the escaped prisoners presents almost insurmountable obstacles. The South Korean police are believed to have made advance preparation for clothing and billets for the escaped prisoners. The President, the Foreign Minister, the Home Minister and the Provost Marshal General have broadcast appeals to the Korean public to cooperate with the government in hiding them. Since the prisoner release is the one issue which has the sympathy of all elements within South Korea, strenuous effort by the UN to recapture them is likely to result in bloodshed, the rise of anti-American sentiment, and increased support for some of Rhee's more extreme demands which is now lacking.

The other course of action offered in the Communist letter is to conclude a truce which excludes the Republic of Korea.

and will implement the armistice despite ROK opposition.

The Communists are certainly aware that the UN Command would prefer the first course of action, that is, to get Rhee under control and recover the prisoners. They themselves would probably prefer the conclusion of a truce without Rhee. In the latter event, the UN Command and Rhee's forces might well become engaged in armed conflict on a large scale. Even if such conflict could be avoided, Rhee would have so compromised himself as to make it difficult or impossible for him to obtain foreign support to resist effectively a later North Korean effort to unify Korea by force of arms.

It is conceivable that Rhee will henceforth be more susceptible to strong American pressure, as he has virtually obtained his objectives regarding the POW issue. It is believed that the UN Command's 25 May proposal, which reversed the earlier UN position calling for the immediate release of the Korean prisoners, was decisive in forming Rhee's attitude toward the armistice. It was actually this issue, rather than the question of unification, which solidified both Rhee's and Foreign Minister Pyun's opposition to the armistice.

It is uncertain, however, that even a mutual defense pact prior to the armistice would ensure Rhee's cooperation. On 19 June, he informed Ambassador Briggs that the signing of an armistice "will mean the automatic withdrawal of South Korean forces from the UN Command," and that he would not permit "even one Indian soldier to enter ROK territory." In a letter to General Clark on 19 June Rhee indicated that the South Korean troops may not withdraw from the demilitarized zone in the event of an armistice.

Rhee appears to believe that his continued opposition to an armistice, would block it and that the fighting will continue. If unable to get a truce on his terms, he probably plans next to create front line incidents and to arouse indecision on the part of the nations participating on the neutral commission.

Whether he will order a unilateral military action is problematical; he still appears more likely to stop short of any suicidal action. The response of the army in the event an attack order is issued is unknown; Rhee, however, is less likely to gain the cooperation of the army commanders for such a move than was the case in the prisoner release, since the army guards

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